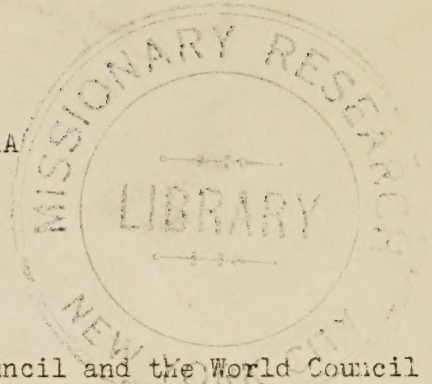


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THE CHRISTIAN SITUATION IN EAST ASIA

A Report by Dr. John A. Mackay

January 4, 1950



On the invitation of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, friends and associates of these groups convened at two-fifteen o'clock, Wednesday afternoon, January 4, 1950, at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., to hear a report by Dr. John A. Mackay, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, on the Eastern Asia Conference held, under the auspices of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, in Bangkok, Siam, December 4 to 11, 1949.

Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, Member of the Presidium, World Council of Churches, presided.

CHAIRMAN OXNAM: Will the meeting please come to order.

I will ask Dr. L. A. Gotwald, of the United Lutheran Church, to lead us in a word of prayer.

Dr. L. A. GOTWALD: We return thanks to Thee, Heavenly Father, that we can gather here in Thy name that we may rejoice in the great work that is carried on throughout the world by Thy church.

We thank Thee for those who have come from various lands and various backgrounds to testify of Thee. We thank Thee for Thy servants that labor in all lands, those who may be today in difficult and hard places. Be very near unto them as we know Thou art near unto us here.

Be near to him who will bring us the message this afternoon, that as we hear his words our hearts may be stirred and our eyes lifted to the new opportunities, the new challenges, which face us all.

Send Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts. Direct us and inspire us and enlighten us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHAIRMAN OXNAM: I know you will not soon forgive me if I did any more than present Dr. Mackay, the President of the International Missionary Council.

As one of the greatest of missionaries, his Christian spirit and piety have been a constant source of inspiration to me and to all who know him personally. He is a member of the Central Council of the World Council of Churches, and the unity of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches enables us to move forward in an atmosphere of hope and expectation.

Dr. Mackay has just returned from Bangkok and we are looking forward to his address with unusual interest.

Dr. Mackay, we are happy to have you here with us. We will sit at your feet and if you do to our hearts and minds what you usually do, it will be a very rich hour for us all.

Dr. Mackay!

The Christian Situation in East Asia

DR. JOHN A. MACKAY: Bishop Oxnam, Friends and Co-Workers: I am deeply indebted to Dr. Decker, and my friends in the International Missionary Council, for the opportunity which has been arranged for me to share with this representative group some of my impressions of the Christian situation in East Asia. And I am deeply moved by the warmth of the introduction of my friend, Bishop Oxnam, though I must very sincerely disclaim my right to the epithets which it has pleased him to apply to my own person and work.

I have just returned, as our Chairman has stated, from what has been a quite brief but very intensive visit to East Asia. I was able to undertake the journey by the grace of the Board of Trustees of Princeton Seminary, who made it possible for me to spend the first part of a sabbatical leave in the Orient. I am at the moment in a little interlude between two parts of a sabbatical leave. I am not really here, officially! (Laughter) I cannot, of course, be here incognito, in this particular place and presence; but on Saturday I leave for a place of seclusion in northern Mexico to do some writing.

I made this journey at the special invitation of the International Missionary Council, which became responsible for it; and the prospect, of course, that lured me on and made me desire to undertake it, was the East Asia Regional Conference which recently met at Bangkok. I was away exactly nine weeks, and during that time I visited briefly, but somewhat intensively, five countries: Japan and Korea; Hong Kong, to overhear what was being said on the Chinese mainland; the Philippine Islands; and then Siam.

There are two temptations into which I do not propose to fall. The first is the temptation to attempt before an audience like this to descant poetically upon the thrills of an air journey. I speak here to some who are more air-minded and air-seasoned than I am, who have soared more than I above and beneath the clouds. So there will be nothing in the nature of an aerologue. Only this. If you go to some places in the Orient, you must proceed and go around the world. By so doing you get home in less time than you could if you went directly to and from your destination.

I equally eschew the temptation to discuss moralistically the significance of the new ecumenical situation, in the secular meaning of the term "ecumenical," which air travel has brought about. I know I need convince nobody here of the fact that air travel has made this world a physical unity and that this involves great responsibilities and opens up equally great opportunities. In this new ecumenical era all men are neighbors and all men are contemporaries, for the first time in history, in a world which is physically united and spiritually chaotic.

From Exotic Section to Representative Region

I shall proceed, therefore, immediately and without further introduction, to consider this area which we ordinarily call "East Asia." It is a vast area in the world of the Pacific, extending from Japan in the north to Oceania and Australia in the south. It is bounded on the east by the Philippine Islands, and on the west by Pakistan on the Afghan border. Within this area live somewhat over a billion people, that is to say, more than half the population of the globe.

The most important thing, I feel, that can be said today about East Asia is this: East Asia has passed from being an exotic section, and has become a representative region, of the world. Let me try to explain what I mean by that statement.

In territorial or geographical language, a section is an area of the globe which is chiefly distinguished from other areas by certain differences. Hitherto, East Asia, as a section, has stood out in sharp contrast from other sections of the world by very profound differences, differences that have always borne a certain exotic quality. In East Asia more than elsewhere have been the strange peoples, the strange religions, the strange customs, the strange modes of life. Here, for the Western mind, time was reckoned, and would always be reckoned, by the "Cycles of Cathay." The Occident was also certain that the poet was right who said,

"East is East, and West is West;
And never the twain shall meet."

It must be said also that such unity as East Asia as an exotic section had was a unity imposed by the outside, by external forces or pressures. It was a unity imposed by conquest or by commerce, or by concessions which were wrung out of weaker or colonial peoples by stronger political and military powers.

That was the situation which existed virtually right up to the edge of the Second World War. But East Asia is no longer an exotic section of the world. East Asia is now a representative region of the world. As distinguished from a section, a region is an area where the people feel that they belong together because of certain factors which are inherent in their own life and relations. Today the peoples of East Asia know that historical circumstances have made them one, have made them a region, have given them a unity formed by inside factors and not imposed by external forces.

Consider what has happened. Today, in the aftermath of the Second World War, you have in East Asia one great defeated power, Japan; several liberated countries, Korea, the Philippine Islands, Indonesia, India, and to a certain extent, Siam; and you have one great nation, perchance the greatest of all, which has been totally overrun by Communism, that is, China.

Whether defeated as Japan or liberated as the Philippine Islands, Korea, India, and Indonesia, or Communist-controlled as in China, East Asia has become a region and a representative region, at that. For today all East Asia has two problems in common: One is the problem of the total reorientation of her thought; the other is the problem of the total reconstruction of her life from the bottom to the top. And these problems East Asia must work out, to a very large extent, on her own resources, at her own initiative, and for her own purposes.

That is what I mean by saying that East Asia has passed from being an exotic section and has become a representative region of the world. There is a sense, too, in which that vast area is a microcosm of the global situation in our time. What has to be done in East Asia, other parts of the globe must also do, and we ourselves are going to have to do it before the end of the day and the end of the road.

I have chosen to speak on the subject of the Christian situation in this representative region of our world. The first topic which invites our attention is

the Christian impact upon East Asia. By that, I mean the impact of the Christian religion, of Christianity, in the fullest sense and most pervasive way, whatever may have been the medium of the impact or the purpose for which it was made.

The Impact of Christian Ideas

There has been in this connection a very decided impact upon East Asia in the realm of ideas. Christian ideas have been making--are making--a profound impact upon East Asia. It is a commonplace, but one of those commonplaces very easily forgotten, especially by politicians, that the greatest forces which there are, are the forces called "ideas." I can never forget the impression made upon my own thinking by Victor Hugo's dictum in LES MISERABLES, which I read as a young man: "There is one force which is more potent than the force of armies: an idea whose time has come."

During the hour which I was privileged to spend with General MacArthur, and in the course of which he opened up to me his whole philosophy of life, and, in particular, of the occupation of Japan, he emphasized once again what I believe he has done frequently: that military might is impotent against the power of ideas. Then he went on to say that what he himself had tried to do--was trying to do--in the occupation of Japan and in American-Japanese relations, was to embody a great idea, and, after having embodied it, to turn it loose on the world to do its work.

"That idea," he said, "is the essential idea in the Sermon on the Mount, that we should love our enemies."

He went on to say: "The men who brought me from Australia to Japan along a road of blood had no fear when they got here. They knew what they could do. They did not have to tell it or make any display of it.

"But," he said, "when we got here we took off our belts and put our power aside and never showed it to the Japanese people. But we mingled freely with the people and we have tried to do the people good, as much good as we could; and the people have responded.

"If we had acted otherwise," he added, "the consequences might have been totally different. But as it is now," he went on, "a people accustomed millennially almost to show adulation to those in authority and to give unqualified obeisance to the strong, transferred their ancient adulation and obeisance from the former war lords to a beneficent conqueror."

That, MacArthur regards as the secret of the fact that nothing untoward has happened in American-Japanese relations. And certainly not even in children's faces does one detect a resentful frown or grimace towards an American soldier or civilian. And of all people in the world children are not given to showing what is not there, or to hiding what is there. If now we succeed in making a worthy peace with Japan, to which we can hold our face, and our children after us, we have been privileged, through the leadership of a great Christian man and his followers, to embody in human relations one of the greatest of all ideas, and an idea for which our chaotic time, so honeycombed with divisions and so envenomed by hate, stands greatly in need of today.

What I am saying is simply this: the fact that our leader in Japan was a Christian man has made it possible to express in that particular part of East Asia called Japan a great Christian idea. We may witness yet the incalculable fruits of that idea, if not in our time, then at some later time.

One of our most distinguished Indian delegates at Bangkok, Dr. Devanandan, who was recently here in the United States, submitted to the conference that three Christian ideas had made an impact upon India as a result of Gandhi's influence. These ideas are: the idea of human worth; the idea of social justice; and, the somewhat vaguer idea, of a sovereign goodness in the universe. These ideas, he said, are potent in India today.

No Hindu philosopher can claim that these ideas had their source or origin in Hinduism. Indeed, traditional Hindu thought and policy find themselves in great difficulty when they endeavor to give constructive expression to these ideas, in the life and thought of India. But they are there, and they have come to stay and to do a work that is more potent than the work of armies.

You have a symbol of their power even now in the government schools of India. In all government schools, we are told, three pictures are hung. In the center there is Gandhi and on either side Buddha and Christ. Christ has his place in India. And He would be incorporated officially tomorrow into the Hindu pantheon if we Christians were willing to compromise our faith. But that we cannot do, for Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only world savior. But Christ's ideas are at work.

From time to time in my journey I found evidence that the old religions of East Asia are themselves being profoundly affected by Christian ideas. In more than one country Buddhism is making frantic attempts to show that what has happened can be understood in Buddhist terms, and that Buddhism has answers for our revolutionary time. But it is not apparent to anyone, to Buddhist thinkers or others, what these answers are; and it has not been proved either that these answers exist.

But one thing is very decidedly happening, especially in Japan. An authority on the subject told me that, more and more, Christian ideas, in the form of quotations from the Bible and Christian thought, appear in Buddhist and Shinto publications, without any acknowledgment whatsoever as to their source; but the ideas are there. The ideas are on the march and they are going to do their own work, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged.

A Christian pastor in Japan informed me that Shintoists are now so concerned about getting into touch with the common people that they are simply ignoring their traditional academic approach. "They were so successful," he said, "in simplifying religious ideas, that they might well be emulated by many Christian pastors and theologians in Japan in communicating to the people the great Christian truths."

The Impact of Christian Personalities

To ideas one must add personalities. Certain great Christian personalities in the Orient are well-known and much-loved names. There is Kagawa, for example, as great and influential as ever, and the Sadhu Sundar Singh, who was lost in the

upper regions of the Himalayas when on a missionary journey to Tibet. But I am not going to speak of these personalities, who will live on in the annals of Christianity and in the history of East Asia.

I choose, instead, other less-known names, the names of people who became known--or better known--to me personally during this visit. There is first a very great Japanese lady called Uemera. She was, I believe, the first subject of Japan to be allowed to leave the engirdled frontiers of her country after the occupation took place.

Here in this room Mrs. Uemera was presented with a Bible by our Presbyterian ladies--a very lovely Bible with a very significant inscription, for presentation to the Empress of Japan. Mrs. Uemera told me that it was her privilege, in due course, to present that Bible to the Empress. Many weeks passed; nothing seemed to happen. Her heart was trembling lest a false step should have been taken. But then came a pressing invitation from the Palace that she should call.

She met both the Emperor and the Empress, and was invited to come to the Palace once a week to give a lesson in the Christian religion, upon the basis of the Bible. The weekly Bible class in the Imperial Palace has been going on ever since. Not only is the lesson given, and not only does the teacher pray at the lesson's close, but now the Empress herself prays. The two women have a little prayer meeting together. I can never forget how the Emperor, when I was privileged to have an audience with him, asked me very particularly if I know Mrs. Uemera. So there is a Christian personality who is an honored visitor, on religious business, in the Imperial home of Japan, right in the center of the psychic void and immeasurable longing which exist in the Japanese soul today.

There occupies the presidency in Korea today a Christian statesman, Syngman Rhee, who was more than forty years in exile from his country. They say he is a Methodist. I am glad to say that, because Mrs. Uemera is a Presbyterian! (Laughter)

I had met Syngman Rhee in Princeton during the war years and when I was in Seoul he invited me one evening to dinner. He told me of his years in Princeton University and added a footnote of which I was not aware: he had lived two years in one of our Seminary dormitories and was a member of a Seminary club, the Calvin Club, which was also Kagawa's club. President Rhee is the most respected man in Korea, so respected and trusted that the people do not like to think what might happen should anything happen to him.

And the leader of the Parliamentary opposition is also a Christian man, who had been forty years in exile in Manchuria. He is an elder in a congregation in Seoul. As regards Syngman Rhee, it might be remembered that he has family worship in his home every morning--in a country where the spiritual void is so great that there is no organized opposition, religious or secular, to the Christian faith, except in Communist circles.

In the Philippine Islands I was introduced to a little lady, Mrs. Perez, who has been in every Philippine cabinet since the country became independent. She holds the portfolio of Minister of Public Welfare, and Mrs. Perez is a Christian and a Church woman who is universally trusted, the only person of cabinet rank who has braved every political upheaval.

I arrived in Siam just too late to meet a great missionary, a man whom the Siamese consider one of the greatest benefactors of their country, Dr. Cort, a medical doctor who for forty years did an extraordinary work in Siam. It was through his influence that the King attended the centennial of Presbyterian work there. I say "Presbyterian" because we happen to be the largest mission in Siam and carry the largest share of the responsibility.

The Siamese Prime Minister opened the new mission hospital in Bangkok, which was opened during the time of my visit; and a leading newspaper in the English language, whose editor is a Buddhist and a Siamese prince, dedicated the whole number to Protestant missions in Siam. It is true that there is a great void at the heart of Buddhism and that Buddhists pride themselves on being tolerant. But why should these things happen? Why should the East Asia Conference have been received as it was, with an official welcome by the Prince Regent? Because of Dr. Cort and other similar personalities in the history of Christian missions in Thailand.

The Impact of the Christian Church

But there is something beyond ideas and something beyond personalities. There is the impact which the Christian Church has made on East Asia.

There was a time--some of us lived in it--when, in our early missionary service, we did not think much about the Church as an organized community. We were thinking only of Christian ideas and of Christian personalities and of the power of Christ and the Gospel to change and influence individuals. We wanted to make the spirit of Christ pervasive and loyalty to Christ effective, whether it was in East Asia or in Latin America, or in some other part of the world.

We were apt in those days to underestimate the importance of the all-too-insignificant Christian community. You could mention one missionary after another who, in the beginning of his missionary career, had little or no sense whatever of the Christian Church. Stanley Jones did not; some of the rest of us did not. In some countries the finest young men never thought of full-time Christian service as pastors in the national churches to which they belonged. We never thought really that the impact of Jesus Christ--the decisive impact--was to come, in the course of time, through the little, despised Christian community. But that is what happened.

We were thinking in those days in terms of the Kingdom of God as a merely temporal order; and it never occurred to us that the Kingdom was to come through the instrumentality of the Church. But as a result of the Church's growth and her triumph over adverse circumstances, the Church loomed up as more immediately important than the Kingdom.

Historical circumstances made it perfectly evident that it is the Church; the Christian community, the committed men and women who enshrine the force which alone can conquer, who stand fast when troublous times come. When revolutionary upheaval takes place, when volcanic fires belch forth and dictators persecute the people who profess the name of Christ--then the Church comes, as it has come in East Asia and elsewhere, into her own.

That leads me directly to speak about the Christian Church in East Asia. In order to simplify matters, and clarify our thought, let me first say something about the missionary movement of the Christian Church. I will do so in some simple propositions.

The Fourth Phase of the Missionary Movement

The first proposition is this: The Christian missionary movement has now entered upon the fourth phase of its development. What have those phases been?

The first phase was the phase of the missionary pioneer, the representative of a Western church, the man who frequently became a martyr. The second phase was the phase of the mission church, ministered to in many instances by missionaries-- I found two such churches in Bangkok in the Chinese community in that city whose pastors are American missionaries.

The third phase was the phase of the independent church. With that phase came certain tensions, especially if the mission had been paternalistic in its policies. In that case the autonomous church, aware of its own power, and in some instances stimulated by national legislation that restricted the power of foreigners, was inclined in turn to show itself paternalistic toward the missionaries in its midst. And then human nature and the "Old Adam" had a grand time!

But that phase has now passed into the fourth phase: the phase of church-mission partnership. That is the phase in which things now are in the erstwhile great mission fields of the world. Today, so far as most national churches and the great missionary societies are concerned, the significant word is "partnership." They are "partners in obedience." At Whitby in Canada two years ago it was agreed, in the first ecumenical missionary gathering since the war, that the closest kind of cooperation should take place between national Christians and missionary brethren, whereby the attempt would be made to transcend all differences in a common approach to the problems of an area, in the name of Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

That phase had to come, though it has come quite slowly. One pauses for a moment just to say this. No missionary society today, no matter how potent it may be, has any right to carry on work independently of a national church, however feeble that church may be. The church must be taken into account in all missionary planning.

That is something for people like ourselves to become really aware of, lest we should think implicitly, if not explicitly, that missions can be ends in themselves, and be glorious realities, to be spoken of with pride and supported with devotion, whatever their contribution may be to the national Christian community or whatever may be the attitude of that community toward them. We have to work things out together as "partners in obedience."

And it is a glorious task! Nothing really has been so majestically successful as the Christian missionary movement of the last one hundred and fifty years. It is the only thing, of a strong, united spiritual character, that, in the abysmal void of these days, confronts advancing Marxism in East Asia.

But the Church, by the grace of God, has come. I "found it there." Our men in the Pacific found it there. My friend, Henry Van Dusen, wrote about it there. The Church is there. That is the great fact in East Asia.

The Robust Adolescence of the New Churches

Now, what shall we say about the Church in East Asia? Here is my second proposition: The new churches in East Asia have reached the stage of robust adolescence. That is clear, first because of certain manifestations in their life, and second, because of certain concerns in their thinking.

The only thing that matters in the way of data is the representative data. Here and there in the course of my journey I found a piece of data which was like a window that opened up a representative truth. I found in Korea certain symbolical representations that manifested in a remarkable way the robust adolescence of the Christian Church in East Asia.

Here is one: A high school and a grade school supported by the proceeds of a factory run by Christian refugees from northern Korea, and the three carried on under the auspices of a Christian congregation! The factory produces rubber shoes of first-grade quality. The refugees have work to do. The proceeds are used for Christian purposes. And a minister, who is both a great evangelist and a great pastor, is the chairman of the board of directors of the concern! That is surely an original manifestation of robust adolescence!

Another: Six Christian hostels that provide homes for young men and women in the several colleges and universities of Seoul. Not many years ago those buildings were brothels! The director, a young Korean pastor, gives one the impression of being the Korean Kagawa. He has a church for those students, the majority of whom are Christians, in a former Buddhist temple.

And the third: A Christian museum upon the site, literally in the precincts, of what was the chief Shinto shrine in Korea. I found in that the richest symbolism of all: a Christian museum where a Shinto shrine had been! It is a remarkable collection, the work of a single pastor who collected all the significant relics. And, believe me, that man is interested not only in Christian history in Korea but in Korean cultural history as well. That in itself is a symbol of the fact that, from the beginning of the Christian era Christians have been interested in everything that has been of vital concern to their own country and to its cultural heritage. It was Christianity that saved all that was best in Greece and Rome and in the ancient cultures of Egypt and Babylon. And now we see it being done again in East Asia. There you have its start: on the top of that lofty eminence in Seoul, a Christian museum where was once a Shinto shrine!

But the concerns of the youthful church in East Asia are equally real. I found in Japan the most representative intellectual concerns which met me anywhere. On four or five occasions groups of Japanese pastors proposed the same general program, which lasted five and a half hours. I was requested to make major addresses and lead discussion on each of the following subjects: Evangelism, Theology and, third, Christian unity.

Those pastors opened up and talked. They wanted to know what was being done in this country in the matter of evangelism. I tried to tell them something of our several preaching missions in recent years. It was their concern and their conviction that they had to get out of the urban centers, out of the city churches away from many traditional ideas and practices, and get to the people. They realized also that they would have to get away from the ancient, highly academic way of speaking about religion, and present Christian truth in simple pictorial terms and images, as Jesus Christ did on the highways of Galilee.

They were deeply interested in theology. They felt they were getting a little too doctrinaire, and, perhaps, too Barthian, in a sense that Karl Barth himself would not approve. I told them there was one thing Karl Barth could not stand, and that was to be called a "Barthian"! They do represent, however, this truth, that theology is needed today in East Asia, although their own theology is a little doctrinaire. What was perfectly clear was that those earnest pastors wanted to have a thorough understanding of the Christian faith, in order that the great Christian doctrines might be made luminous like torches, to open up the way, and the great Christian concepts become not mere badges to prove or disprove orthodoxy, but rather watchwords to be inscribed on crusading banners.

In Hong Kong one got echoes of the fact that one of the greatest needs of the Christian Church in China is Christian theology, which has been greatly neglected. There was a time, the time when the "Church" as a category had to defer to the "Kingdom," when Christian thought had to take second place to Christian action and Christian feeling. At that time we virtually forgot that we had to love the Lord, our God, with our minds as well as with our hearts.

Marxist China is going to force the theological issue. Unless the Christian churches in China get a really massive world view to put over against Marxism, then God pity them and other churches, too!

There is no greater need here, or there, than the need of a dynamic theology. I do not mean a scholastic, doctrinaire theology of which we have plenty. I mean a theology whose concepts are richly Biblical and Christo-centric, more dynamic and luminous than the current political philosophies, and than all secular and non-Christian attempts to make man known to himself, and to open up the ways of God to man. And today, the ministers and the laity in East Asia and everywhere are seeking after a basic understanding of the Christian faith and its implications.

The Problem of Unity

The churches in East Asia are concerned about unity. In the realm of unity, something is taking place that we ought to bear in mind. I do not know really how to describe the particular concern for unity that marks the churches in East Asia. It is something indigenous. It is not just the desire to become organically or ecclesiastically united.

If I might say so--in a rather venturesome way--many churches in the Orient have become imbued with ecumenical denominationalism. Now, of course, this question, to deal with it adequately, would require a long discussion. But we have to face the fact that there are world denominations, ecumenical denominations, which have projected themselves around the globe.

There are two view-points. It has not been settled yet whether the best way to achieve Christian unity is to consolidate the existing denominations on a world scale, or whether in every instance, and at the earliest possible moment, all the old denominations should everywhere become one. The great issue at the moment in certain countries, as in Japan, is the issue between an organically united church structure, on a national scale, and the idea of an ecumenical or federated Christian council. Some people who are committed absolutely to Christian unity and brotherliness are in favor of one and some are in favor of the other; and both give their reasons.

As regards "ecumenical denominationalism," of which there appears to be a resurgence, both here and in East Asia, I want to say just one thing and pass on. We have to face the fact that world denominations can disrupt the ecumenical movement or they can enrich the movement. So far as my own thinking is concerned, they need not disrupt Christian unity but may enrich it. It is only through a given religious heritage that one becomes imbued with the Christian faith. You cannot be a Christian in general, any more than you can be a citizen of the United States in general, with no special affiliation or attachment to any local community. A man who said, "I am an American citizen, but no village, city, county or state of the Union means anything to me," would be a perfect monstrosity. That man would have absolutely no sympathy with the real problems of ordinary people nor interest in those loyalties and traditions which give human life concrete content and enrichment. It may be that just as there is springing up a new regionalism, as distinguished from the old sectionalism, which thought of itself as merely different from other sections, there may be springing up a new denominationalism which is self-critical, which wants to know what God said to the fathers, what He did through the denominations, and which is ready nevertheless to slough off all that is unworthy in the denominational inheritance and bring the pure gold into the ecumenical storehouse.

On the other hand, ecumenical denominationalism could easily disrupt or sterilize the ecumenical movement. It could do so and frustrate the will of Jesus Christ and the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the Church of our time, if any ecumenical denomination were to prevent any one of its constituent parts entering into a local, national, or regional union with other Christian churches unless it gave its consent. I am happy to be able to say that, so far as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System is concerned, the Alliance does not regard it as its main objective to promote Presbyterianism in the world.

I say this, because we have got to do some real thinking as to what that form of unity is which is most Christian, and at the same time most appropriate for the historical and circumstantial needs of a given area. I say this also, because we are apt to become doctrinaire and scholastic in dealing with the subject of Christian unity, just as we so often are in dealing with other things human and divine. I know ecumenical leaders, for example, who are so doctrinaire and impersonal that they are incapable of solving any human problem, whether of sinner or saint. (Laughter) They live in such an ethereal dimension and amid such a wealth of conferences and ecclesiastical and theological abstractions, that they do not know people and cannot deal with people.

The Bangkok Conference

But I must race on to my third main proposition on the Christian movement in East Asia. It is this: The new churches in East Asia have celebrated their First Regional Conference. Fifteen countries were represented. It was an eight-day conference held in Bangkok from December 4 - 11, under the joint auspices of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches.

Now let this be made quite clear. The parent bodies had not sponsored the gathering in order to promote their own interests. They were merely interested in giving our Christian brothers and sisters in East Asia an opportunity to get together and to work, in comradeship, on concerns of their own choosing, without any imposition from the sponsoring bodies. That policy was strictly held to. We who represented the parent bodies could talk, but no one outside East Asia had a right to vote. In fact, they did not take us too seriously; they took just for what we were worth in true Christian, ecumenical style.

What was the significance of that gathering? Three things, it seems to me, make up its importance. The first is that the new churches in East Asia recognized the reality and the challenge of the new order. As they came together and worked together, they became aware that the old exotic section was gone and that they all formed part of a great new and representative region. It came home to them what it meant to represent autonomous churches. Their churches had great responsibilities; they must manifest Christian solidarity; they had an important role to play for Jesus Christ in East Asia.

There came out of the Conference the decision to appoint a pastor-at-large. No one wanted an East Asia regional organization. They did want, however, a personal tie to bind them all together. They wanted a big-hearted, clear-sighted, Christian-spirited man, who would move from land to land, interpret Christ to them all, and themselves to one another; one who would make them feel their unity and inspire them with a sense of their common responsibility to Jesus Christ.

In the second place, the delegates were literally overwhelmed with a sense of the majestic uniqueness of the Christian faith. So absorbed were they with that vision that they devoted little time to considering their own religious and cultural heritage. They knew that the old religions and the traditional cultures were insufficient. They were loyal sons and daughters of their several countries, but they went on record as saying that in their judgment the best way to influence life and thought in their own countries was to become steeped in Christian, especially Biblical, thought, to have communion with the Christian Lord, to devote themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel, and to leave everything else in God's hands to be dealt with in the future at a less critical time. For if they were the Christians that the Christian faith demanded them to be, they would also be the Indians and Koreans and Japanese that they should be. They would thus make their highest contribution to their several countries. In other words, they were so awed by the majesty of Christ and His truth, that that vision transcended everything else, and they wanted to let themselves go in a great common immediate evangelistic effort. So the original topic, "The East Asia Cultural Heritage in Relation to the Christian Message," became transformed into "The Proclamation of the Gospel in East Asia."

And, thirdly, they made a distinction between the two aspects of the Communist phenomenon. They distinguished, on the one hand, between the social revolution which has been under way for a long time, and the aspirations for social justice which are manifested in the lands of East Asia and other parts of the world, and, on the other hand, Marxist ideology and the political Communism which capture and pervert that natural craving for justice.

It is perfectly clear that Communism has been able to prevail in East Asia, where it has prevailed, because of the longing of the people for something better; for justice; for rectitude and integrity in government service; for peace; for honor; for things which they have never known, or have not known for a long time. While, therefore, the Conference was uncompromisingly anti-Marxist, it did sound this note of caution. In being opposed to the theory of Communism and to the political and social order which it introduces, let us be constantly aware of the longings and aspirations of the common people.

Our Double Duty to East Asia

Now in conclusion, we have a double duty to East Asia--a political duty and a Christian duty. We have a political duty as American citizens; we have a Christian duty as ecumenical churchmen.

What is our political duty in this very crucial moment when our statesmen are again discussing the Chinese question? One thing that is very disconcerting and disturbing is that we are allowing ourselves, as a people, to become controlled in our diplomatic policies and our international relations by pure negation, that is, by an anti-Communist psychology. That is going to be fatal if it continues.

Where is our faith? Where is our vision? Where is our knowledge? Communism has come to China and will remain in China for a long time, for a very long time. And it has come because the Chinese people, war weary, their faith shattered in the integrity of their government and leaders, and longing for social justice, have found the advancing armies of Communism better than the order they have displaced.

I did not find anywhere a divergent voice on this particular question. Nearly two years ago, in April, 1948, the early Communist tactics which had been used in Manchuria disappeared, and the soldiers, both officers and men, became models of good behavior. They paid their way. They did not billet themselves where they were not wanted. When officers received treatment in hospitals they sent letters of appreciation. They gave good and orderly government and did their best to solve local economic problems. Whatever our opinion of Communism, that must be taken into account.

Our danger is--not to pursue the discussion of this point further--our danger is that, if we in this country continue to follow our purely anti-Communist policy we shall irrevocably alienate the Chinese people in the moment of their great need. I am unqualifiedly in favor of recognizing the new regime, whatever we may think of it socially and politically, in the immediate best interests of China and as a contribution toward international understanding and peace. For, if not, we shall be charged with being unsympathetic to the aspirations of the Chinese people and moved by ulterior imperialistic designs. For that reason we ought, I believe, to reconsider our policy and recognize the regime.

And what is our Christian duty? There is abundant evidence in support of the opinion that this is one of the Christian Church's greatest and sublimest moments. It is a time for the whole Church of Jesus Christ to unite in a great missionary movement in the abysmal void of East Asia, where the old religions are disintegrating or proving utterly inadequate, and where there is an unprecedented responsiveness and even a predisposition on the part of the peoples in that region to give Christianity a chance.

Is the question asked: Is the Christian missionary movement over? The Christian missionary movement is just beginning now--in a bigger way and for bigger stakes; on a more global scale and in a more diversified form; with a deeper passion and a more ardent loyalty to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, than at any time in its history.

I came back from East Asia with no pessimism or defeatism in my heart. That region and other regions may have to go through the dark valley, but there are glints of light in the darkness, and beyond the valley, a dawn.

There was one thing in the ancient religions that stirred my imagination: the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. I abhorred its pagan basis and implications. But one thing in it had a subtle attraction. What would it not mean to my romantic Celtic nature to have the hope, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, to be reincarnated every few decades in another body, that I might be a missionary in some new land of East Asia and, until the Kingdom came, live through the rhythm of the re-orientation and redemption of a people's spiritual life! (Applause)

CHAIRMAN OXNAM: Dr. Mackay, I have been so busy taking notes that I have been unable to find the words that this body would wish me to use in expressing our appreciation!

We are grateful for the analysis that was so illuminating, and the pleasure that came from the occasional synthesis. You said, referring to committed persons: "...who enshrine the force that alone can conquer"--and we saw one of the committed persons! It has been a very wonderful hour; we are grateful beyond thanks.

I wonder now, as we come to the question period, if you would wish to begin all over! It is a little difficult to ask a question after a moment in which one has envisioned reincarnation and coming back to this world time and time again! In fact, Dr. Mackay, we would be glad to have you start in again and speak once more!